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ABSTRACT

In an era of deregulation, technology, foreign competition, and merger mania, corporations are forced to respond to a changing corporate culture climate. Traditionally based on a top-down structure, corporate culture--loosely defined as the sum total of how employees and management think, feel, act, or do not act--is changing toward a structure in which power is shared at all levels. When companies undergo complex reorganization, employees, who may be resistant to change, need to be continually informed for maximum operational effectiveness. When employees envision change as a means of retraining or redevelopment for the survival of their jobs and their organization, they are more tolerant of their company's position. Businesses are also adapting to change by welcoming innovation with entrepreneurial, participatory management styles. Companies such as Xerox, Campbell Soup Company, General Motors, and Whirlpool encourage entrepreneurial thinking and employee-owner teamwork to solve problems of organization and production. Yet even with increased employee independence, organizational goals and objectives should be defined clearly so that employee teams have a specific direction to follow in their daily decision making. With these guidelines, the work system can shift to a more participatory, innovative managerial system where managers switch from status decision-makers to contributing coaches, placing the corporate ball in the workers' hands. (Sixty-one references are appended.) (MM)

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The Corporate Culture Climate at the Crossroads: Back to the Future

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The Corporate Culture Climate at the Crossroads:
Back to the Future

In its 1984 annual report, General Electric said, "A company must change faster than the world around it. . . .You are either the very best at what you do or you don't do it for very long" (Pascarella, 1986). This statement could be aligned to the uncertainties of today's corporate environment. Corporate culture has become a household word and is being perceived as a panacea by some boardroom executives. Peters and Waterman's best seller In Search of Excellence (1982), has prompted organizations to strive to reproduce the "excellent" companies as young artists are striving to reproduce the color and lines of the great masters. Since Ouchi's Theory Z describing the transition from a top-down power structure to a structure in which power is shared at all levels, many organizations are changing their culture focus toward team managers, with employees being their own bosses.

One can define corporate culture only nebulously as the sum total of how employees and management think, feel, act or do not act. The habits of a culture may be viewed as analogous to the habits of a family or of an individual, "an organizational character" (Selznick, 1952, 1957) having its own roots, holding its own concepts, beliefs, lifestyles, and norms to live and work by. Seemingly, stories and myths help to endoctrinate and socialize new employees into the habits, values, and philsophies of a culture (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Wilkins, 1983). Clyde Kluckholm characterizes culture as "the set of habitual and traditional ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting that are characteristic of the ways a particular society meets its problems at a particular point in time" (Ernest, 1984, p. 49). Problem solving can only be attained in a strong communicating

family and in a strong communicating culture. How does a corporation bring together an array of unique personalities from vastly different fields of experience and with different beliefs in such a way that they feel a universal commitment to their specific work place (Frost et al., 1985). The Japanese have been successful because it is the custom of their culture to communicate their strong, cohesive values on a national scale (Deal, Kennedy 1982). We might reason that it is this continual communication of a united culture that makes the difference between succeeding or failing. C.S. Ford Supports Kluckholm's theory when he explains that strong culture communication is "composed of responses which have been accepted because they have met with success (Schwartz & Davis, 1981, p. 35)." The organization itself appears to have "socially created meanings" (Putnam, 1983). As Tompkins and Cheney posit, "the organization influences the individual and the individual influences the organization" (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983, p. 14).

In this era of deregulation, technology, foreign competition and merger mania, corporations are forced to respond to a changing cultural climate. Change can be so subtle that it is difficult to identify. John Naisbitt speaks to this point in his book Megatrends, "As a society, we have been moving from the old to the new. And we are still in motion. . . .No longer do we have the luxury of operating within an isolated, self-sufficient, national economic system; we now must acknowledge that we are part of a global economy" (1982, p. 1). This driving, competitive economy has caused us to lose face with the Japanese in the automobile industry and with the Germans in the machine tool industry. Our tools were once the pride of the world (U.S. Commission, p. 6-7). Not only have we been losing face, but we have been

losing market shares in many other basic industries since the 1960s (Drucker, 1985). The self concept of U.S. industry is sorely shattered. It has been imperative for industries to change dramatically or to risk losing their competitive position in the world market. Menninger, vice-president group manager at Burson-Marsteller notes that the experiences of the recent recession taught business that "the pursuit of success has been reconceived as a kind of daily struggle for survival" (Finding What Makes People, 1984). Since group culture is a habit pattern (Peters and Waterman, 1982), it lends security in helping people cope with environmental struggles. In short, we could theorize that a cohesive culture is a significant crutch in mastering a changing environment. Furthermore, since the focus of a culture is primarily on the people who do the communicating, the mechanism for productivity can be found in the beliefs, action, and behavior of managers and employees (Schein, 1986). This paper focuses on the transformation of human resources which has occurred because of the changing economic, social, and technological climate. The paper stresses innovation and entrepreneurship as a major corporate challenge and emphasizes the mutual dedication of managers and employees to the achievement of company goals through interpersonal communication.

Negative Attitude Toward Change

Change is becoming such a natural way of life for the corporate world that Barrett (1985) finds it appropriate to create the nonce word "cambietics" that she defines as the new science of managing change. Companies are becoming more aware that "organizations are human institutions, not mechanical systems. . .In order for one to change. . .its members, must develop new skills, assumptions, and values. . ." (Kilmann, et al., 1985, p. 264). Resistance to change, a natural trait, springs from the inherent need for security that compels a person to desire the same type of breakfast each

morning, to insist on the same product brand, or to strive to retain the same daily lifestyle pattern. Obviously, any change from habitual daily procedure or the comforting, protective ritual of pattern may cause tension and stress. Moreover, when a drastic change in an employee's work life is imminent, he/she may use the defense of denial in order to maintain equilibrium by refusing to accept the reality of change (Pascarella, 1987, July 27). Clearly, according to Alan Frohman and Marc Fenton, change consultants, dramatic changes in the climate of a culture can be likened to the grieving process in death and dying. For the most part, even the survivors need a chance to mourn (Pascarella, 1987). For this reason, it is suggested that generosity to their less fortunate colleagues serves as a solace to them.

Not so long ago, even employees who did not particularly like their jobs, viewed their work environment as a dependable place where they were needed. And in a certain sense, it was relaxing to go home at night knowing that seniority alone would give them a place to work year after year until they received the gold watch of retirement. However, the world of work is no longer taken for granted. More than ever before, the critical organizational changes (Thorne, 1987) are causing psychological trauma as employees fear the unknown--either losing their jobs or at least becoming redundant. Downsizing, an overused euphemism in business circles today, literally means firing, laying-off, or some form of employee extinguishing (Mindszenthy, 1986).

For both emotional and economical reasons, employees have a need to talk back and ventilate their frustrations in a face to face encounter with management. When DuPont experienced a crisis, the business manager went to the New Jersey plant at 5:00 a.m. and stayed for three shifts to talk to employees about the company's financial plans (Morse, 1987).

Appropriately, IBM traditionally thinks of its employees as the company. When its Greencastle, IN plant was no longer cost effective, John Akers, president and C.E.O., flew to the plant; in an overall company meeting executives and employees were told at the same time about the plant closing. During this meeting employees were told that they could have a job in the company's plants in other cities, early retirement was arranged for those nearing retirement, and retraining was made available for those who did not want to move. The employees were saddened and stunned, but did not complain or rebel because of the options offered and because they were the first to be informed (Personal Interview, 1986). Francis Bacon was aware of the desirability of being informed when he noted: "There is nothing makes a man suspect much, more than to know little."

There is no single method of managing change that is absolutely supreme (Pascarella, 1987); however, there is an overwhelming agreement by change agents that employees must be considered first. Many companies are finding themselves at the crossroads of a complex reorganizational phenomenon. As they prepare to make dramatic changes for survival, their employees are feeling the impact. Employees not only need to be treated more seriously but they need to be continually informed for maximum operational effectiveness.

Communication: Tell The People

Sociologist Emile Durkheim views the culture of an organization as a positive device which controls moral values. If family loyalty is a favored value, teamwork could engender greater motivation, compatibility, and productivity (Schein, 1986) in the corporate household.

Management is beginning to ask whether the people whose lives are affected should not be part of the decision-making process? In an effort to quell rumors and generate greater respect and credibility, there is a trend toward continual communication concerning the company goals and job security (Kanter, 1986). Robert Marquis of Burson-Marsteller urges that meetings be held quickly and periodically even if there is nothing substantial to report. The manner and very act of communicating may be just as important as what is said (Pawelek, 1985). In any event, employees have the inalienable right to be informed of operations that affect their lives and well-being (Gerard, 1986). Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio has proposed a bill that would prevent plant closings without advance notice to employees. This bill would require that workers be informed ninety days in advance, but without any consulting or negotiating privileges (Kiplinger, 1987, June 12).

Unfortunately as Tom Peters (1987, April 27) notes, "great America`s answer to efficiency. . .is still to eliminate people rather than view them as a primary source of value added. There are no excellent companies."

Rosabeth Moss-Kanter (1987) suggests identifying change with the learning process in order to diminish the threat factor. If employees envision change as a means of retraining or redevelopment for the survival of their jobs and their organization, they will be more tolerant of the company's position. More than ever before, employee involvement and support are needed to combat employee resistance (Stackel, 1985-1986, Grubbs, 1986). J. Paul Dittman, vice-president for corporate planning at Whirlpool struggled over sharing the company's new five-year "roadmap to the future" with employees. If the privileged information were leaked to its competitors, the entire innovative

plan would be destroyed. His final decision was that since the employees are the company, and execute the plans, they must be told (Moskal, 1986). Whirlpool maintains that this type of climate brings about cultural unity.

Employees As Management Teams

Thomas J. Watson Jr. is still following his father's philosophy which is still right on target. He stresses a value that helped to build IBM: "I believe the real difference between success and failure in a corporation can very often be traced to the question of how well the organization brings out the great energies and talents of its people" (Watson, 1963).

Appropriately, companies are increasingly sharing the state-of-the-art with their employees who do the work. And at the same time they are spending more time listening and encouraging creativity and innovativeness. Moreover, many of the larger organizations have adopted an attitude of entrepreneurial flexibility that perceives a certain amount of calculated failure as a learning experience (Jennings, 1987).

Until the late 1970s, corporations still rigidly followed the chain of command, until the innovative products of global competition and a world quite different from the one we were familiar with, required more decision-making minds (Drake, 1986). According to Drucker, being close to the market and the customer, takes a lot of team effort (Drake, 1986).

In citing his book, Every Employee a Manager, Scott Myers envisions that if everyone in the organization has employee-owner commitment, involvement and teamwork will follow (Myers, 1970).

One way to better understand Myers' theory is through the success story of Springfield Remanufacturing Center (SRC). In 1982 when International Harvester was facing turbulent times, it sold SRC to thirteen management

employees, who in turn, made the existing employees the managers of the company. Employees had access to all company information and were to receive any profits. This motivation sent sales to 16 million in 1983 and to 30 million in 1985. Employee ownership sparked revitalization (Denton, 1987).

In the same view, General Motors and the Saturn experiment is an innovative employee-as-manager project. The United Auto Workers and General Motors gave the status of quality managers to six thousand employees who were viewed as management with no time clocks and a guarantee of job security and profit-sharing. Working in self-directed teams, they were motivated, productive, and inherently seemed to develop a new passion for their work (Hoglund, 1986).

In addition, compare the Campbell Soup Company which has virtually remained in a strong position, because even during emerging environmental change, people still eat soup. Not surprisingly, Campbell wanted to be innovative just to thrive and to celebrate a new market focus. After meeting with 1200 employees at the front office to get their input on how to improve the quality of work life, fifty business units were coached by an entrepreneur. Anthropologists and psychologists were brought in to speak on cultural attitudes about soup. Awards and compensations were given. The results were far more dramatic than the company anticipated as sales and earnings doubled and tripled (Baum, 1986).

Entrepreneurial Management

As was mentioned previously, nowhere has change been more shattering than in the massacre of middle management. Too many chiefs and not enough Indians is not cost effective in today's intensely competitive market. The future promises no respite in this economic and competitively stressful

climate. Business is meeting the challenge by welcoming innovation with entrepreneurial participatory management styles (Moss-Kanter, 1983). The term "entrepreneur" was coined by a French economist J.B. Say approximately two hundred years ago, and at that time he defined the term as a person who "shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield" (Drucker, 1985).

In other words, entrepreneurs are placed in a position of power to improve business. According to Kanter, "they push the creation of new products, lead the development of new production technology, or experiment with new, more humanly responsive work practices" (Kanter, 1983). Entrepreneurs must be given the authority to go out on a limb and get nonroutine things done. As an example of entrepreneurial thinking, Hewlett-Packard's long-term growth rate is attributed to the company's belief that every employee should strive to be an entrepreneur (Uttal, 1983 p. 66).

Xerox has created a new way of corporate life with employee teamwork, commitment, and business improvements. CEO David T. Kearns proudly tells about the 100,000 employees at Xerox who are problem solvers and trouble shooters for the company that brings them profit; he estimates cost savings of two billion dollars annually. One team solved a laser-printer field problem that engineers had failed to solve in five years, with savings for the company of one million dollars a year (Thompson, 1986).

Kanter (1986, September 19) asserts that above all other qualities an entrepreneur must know how to organize others and delegate work. In the traditional sense, managers were present in their offices to solve short-term problems; now entrepreneurs work with the people, alter moods, and change the way people think about what is necessary and possible. Drucker (1985)

comments that in an entrepreneurial style of management, each employer has freedom to become a trailblazer by using his initiative and sharing his ideas. In Hertzberg's findings of managing human resources, he maintains that management must make the work interesting if an employee is to feel passionate about his job (Hertzberg, 1987). Data from many of his employee interviews revealed that when people were dissatisfied with their jobs, they attributed the feeling to the work itself (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

Similarly, Chris Argyris' findings in his comparison of bureaucratic/pyramidal values with humanistic/democratic values reveal that entrepreneurial, democratic, humanistic values make work life more exciting and challenging. This in turn fosters motivation, brings about intergroup cohesiveness, and helps both employees and the organization to develop to full potential (Hersey, & Blanchard, 1982).

The significance of modern times suggests that our work system must shift to a more participatory, innovative managerial system where the managers switch from status decision-makers to contributing coaches who place the ball in the hands of the workers (Kanter, 1986, winter).

John Brodie, former quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers football team gives insight into true incalculable team energy.

> ". . .When you have men who know each other very well and have every ounce of their attention--and intention--focused on a common goal, and all their energy flowing in the same direction, this creates a very special concentration of power. Everyone feels it. The people in the stands always feel it and respond to it, whether they have a name for it or not (Beck & Hillmar, 1984).

Organizational Goals and Objectives

Traditional leadership styles cannot develop the kind of team work to which Brodie refers; this style depends on an enthusiastic, dedicated coach.

As a coach believes his team is number one, a manager must believe his company is number one. Instead of directing the plays from his office, he manages his team by walking around (MBWA). The coaching management symbols MBWA means being there, staying in touch, listening, teaching, innovating, emphasizing and facilitating on the field with the team (Peters & Austin, 1985). For the most part, it means using common sense or humanistic management in dealing with the employees involved in the work. MBWA means many things when common sense is not so common; for instance, it can mean finding out what people are thinking, what type of problem they are facing, or what is "bugging" them. It allows employees freedom to operate on their own. An example that could be classical is told by Don Vlcek, president of Domino's Pizza Distribution Company:

> He was on one of his regular field trips, and a supervisor was complaining that in the process of delivering dough to one particular shop, delivery people had repeatedly broken an exposed basement window. Vlcek whipped a $20 bill out of his pocket and said, "Buy some plywood and cover it permanently.". .We don't have any rules that prevented you from doing that. I expect you, within reasonable limits, to do what needs to be done.' (p. 380, Peters & Austin, 1985)

President Vlcek gave his supervisor clear direction as to the strategy expected. Employees need to have direction and to understand that the corporate purpose is built on personal purpose and on the basis of what needs to be done (Frohman, and Pascarella, 1986). Without direction and a clearly defined roadmap of organizational goals and objectives, efforts of employees may fail (McTague, 1986). Many companies today are spelling out their goals, values, and ideals to employees through mission or purpose statements. This mission or purpose statement concretely communicates to the employees the philosophy of the company and how employees must direct their efforts (Frohman, Pascarella, 1987). As leadership and clarity of company purpose is

defined in a mission statement, employee teams have a specific goal to follow in their daily decision making. As an example, 3M has one engrained motto, "Never kill an idea" (Corbett, 1986). Many successful products, including the post-it-notes, evolved from that single motto. A purpose/mission statement encompasses the reputation and personality of a company's culture; e.g., IBM's "customer service, excellence, and respect for the individual" (Frohman & Pascarella, March 23, 1987) has been a recognized mission of the company world-wide. Geoff Nightingale, executive vice-president of Burson Marsteller, the New York-based public relations firm; indicates that his firm has been barraged with requests for mission-generating goals and objectives from European firms (Pascarella, 1986, October 13). The mission statement may be the key for top-down commitment. Employees must have role models for commitment ideals; they easily detect any inconsistency between written policy and executive performance. At the same time, it is the manager's first job to assume that his employees are committed. Schatz & Schatz, 1986, imply that showing trust in employees and giving them freedom to perform may evoke a self-fulfilling prophecy of commitment. Most important, the entire organization should be provided with a definition of the reputation that the company intends to live up to in conducting business. The positions of management and workers may blur as the two groups focus together on what is important for the company. Such a situation echoes to Marshal McLuan's theme, "No passengers on spaceship earth; we are all crew."

Conclusion

This paper focused on the transformation of human resources which has occurred because of the changing economic, social and technological climate.

It discussed employee attitudes toward change and the ethical duty of management to keep employees informed of impending change. The paper stressed innovation and entrepreneurship as a major corporate challenge. Finally, it emphasized the need for mutual dedication of managers and employees to the achievement of company goals. Future research would call for greater sensitivity between management and employees in the execution of the change process.

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